

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BELIZE 00522 200032Z

64

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 SCI-06 SCS-03 COME-00 EB-11 AGR-20

AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 HEW-08 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04

PRS-01 RSC-01 SCA-01 USIA-15 SWF-02 EUR-25 PM-07 H-03

L-03 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 IGA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /209 W

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P 192228Z SEP 74

FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3691

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 522

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR EAID BH

SUBJECT: HURRICANE FIFI

1. THE PROJECTED PATH OF HURRICANE FIFI ACROSS BELIZE CUTS A WIDE SWATH THROUGH THE COUNTRY'S MOST PRODUCTIVE FOOD PRODUCING AREA. IT APPEARS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT BELIZE'S NEW BANANA INDUSTRY WILL BE COMPLETELY WIPED OUT, ALONG WITH A MAJOR PORTION OF ITS CITRUS INDUSTRY, ITS RICE CROP AND MUCH OF WHAT IS LEFT OF ITS CORN CROP (THE LATTER SUFFERED SERIOUS DAMAGE AS A RESULT OF HURRICANE CARMEN).

2. PREMIER PRICE HAS BEEN SHARPLY CRITIZED BY HIS OPPOSITION FOR NOT HAVING DECLARED THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY CARMEN A NATIONAL DISASTER. THIS, PLUS THE FAR GREATER DAMAGE FIFI SEEMS CERTAIN TO INFLICT, MAKE IT VERY LIKELY, IN MY OPINION, THAT PRICE WILL DECLARE A NATIONAL DISASTER SOON AFTER PRELIMINARY REPORTS OF DAMAGE COME IN -- PROBABLY NO LATER THAN TOMORROW.

3. GIVEN SPECIAL STATUS OF BELIZE AS A COUNTRY WHICH IS NOT YET FULLY INDEPENDENT BUT STILL NOT ACCURATELY CLASSIFIABLE AS A BRITISH COLONY, IT OCCURS TO ME THAT THE QUESTION OF WHAT, IF ANY, SHOULD BE OUR ROLE IN RELIEF MEASURES LIKELY TO BE NEEDED HERE MIGHT NOT BE READILY ANSWERABLE BY THE APPLICATION OF EXISTING CRITERIA.

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PAGE 02 BELIZE 00522 200032Z

RM ALTHOUGH OUR POLICY IN REGARD TO ECONOMIC AID TO BELIZE AS OUTLINED IN THE CASP IS TO KEEP IT SMALL, LEST WE ENCOURAGE THE BRITISH TO THINK WE WOULD MOVE IN IF THEY MOVED OUT, I QUESTION WHETHER THIS STRICTURE CAN BE APPLIED WITH EQUAL VALIDITY TO DISASTER RELIEF IN WHICH THE HUMANITARIAN ELEMENT WOULD BE CLEARLY PARAMOUNT. ALSO, I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE UNFAVORABLE COMPARISONS THAT WOULD INEVITABLY BE MADE HERE IF WE WERE TO COME FORTH WITH A SUBSTANTIAL RELIEF EFFORT FOR OTHER VICTIMS OF HURRICANE FIFI AND DO NOTHING FOR BELIZE. MANY BELIZEANS REMEMBER THAT THERE WAS A SUBSTANTIAL U.S. AID PROGRAM HERE AFTER HURRICANE HATTI IN 1961.

5. I AM RAISING THIS QUESTION ON A HYPOTHETICAL BASIS NOW, RATHER THAN WAIT UNTIL IT ACTUALLY ARISES BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES DISCUSSED ABOVE. I DO NOT NEED A REPLY TO THIS TELEGRAM, BUT I WOULD HOPE THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT BEGIN CONSIDERING THE MATTER NOW SO THAT WHEN THE QUESTION OF WHAT WE MIGHT DO TO HELP BELIZE IS PUT TO US, WE WILL BE ABLE TO ANSWER IT REASONABLY PROMPTLY.  
GAWF

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